Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• The 21st annual Great Lake Tahoe Sternwheeler Race between California's Tahoe Queen and Nevada's M.S. Dixie II is Aug. 31 at 10am.

• Rubicon Trail users on Aug. 29 will experience temporary delays in accessing the trail in the area of the rest stop at Ellis Creek because of work on the Ellis Creek Bridge.

• The Landing Resort & Spa in South Lake Tahoe is having open houses Aug. 31 and Sept. 1 from 8am-3pm. The hotel is located at 4104 Lakeshore Blvd.

• A Pennsylvania man has been missing since July 17. Matt Greene was last seen in the Mammoth area. More info is on the flyer.

Quest is on for safer drinking water in U.S.

By Peter Andrey Smith, New York Times

UNIONTOWN, Pa. – On a muggy Friday afternoon in a strip mall parking lot, as thunder echoed in the Alleghenies and cottonwood seeds floated on the breeze, Lee Stanish, 32, a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Colorado Boulder, and Natalie Hull, 24, a lab manager, stepped out of a white

van, its hood plastered with dead insects.

After a brief conversation with a chain store manager, the two women retrieved a large black container from their van and wheeled it into the bathroom. Ms. Hull opened the faucet and let the cold water run. The two snapped on disposable gloves, unpacked their equipment, and began collecting tap water.

Hull checked the water temperature and filled water in a vial of formaldehyde for cell counts. Stanish placed another vial of water in a portable chlorine meter for analysis. “We’re in and out in about 10 minutes,” she said. Hull flipped the faucet off. On to the next tap.

By nightfall, the van would be loaded with close to 30 gallons of water sampled from dozens of locations across the Ohio River Valley. Stanish and Hull planned to set up a mobile laboratory in a hotel room in Morgantown, W.Va., all in an effort to understand a hidden underground ecology where organisms eke out a living in dark, cool pipes loaded with chlorine.

“What we know so far is that it’s usually very clean,” Stanish said. “But it’s a disturbed environment.”

The 53,000 water utilities in the United States deliver some of the safest drinking water in the world – a public health victory of unrivaled success that began in 1908 with chlorination campaigns in Jersey City and Chicago. Still, millions of individual cases of waterborne diseases occur annually and related hospitalization costs approach $1 billion each year. In 2007 and 2008, the most recent years for which figures are available, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recorded 164 waterborne disease outbreaks, almost entirely from protozoan cysts of the parasite Cryptosporidium.

Read the whole story

Bay Area man drowns at Sand Harbor

By Kathryn Reed

A San Mateo man drowned at Sand Harbor after he fell off a borrowed standup paddleboard.

Kenneth Campo, 42, was between 200 and 300 yards from shore to the right of the boat ramp on Aug. 23 about 3:45pm. Witnesses told authorities they heard him yell, fall and never surface.

Someone on shore swam to the area and was able to pull Campo off the bottom of the lake from about 20-feet down. Campo was pronounced dead at an area hospital.

Ed Lyngar with the Nevada Department of Wildlife said the death is under investigation.

“People who visit Tahoe are often unprepared for cold water. Cold water shock is a real thing,” Lyngar told *Lake Tahoe News*. “Cold water can cause swim failure. That is why we say a life jacket is the most important piece of equipment you can have.”

Lyngar was quick to add that it is too soon to know if that is what happened in this case.

Lake Tahoe can feel warm to the touch, especially this time of year, or even a foot down. But farther down and farther offshore it can quickly drop to 60 degrees.

Lyngar said because Campo borrowed the board he missed out on the safety talk from the rental company that would have gone over issues about the water temperature.

A life jacket was secured to the paddleboard with the leash that is supposed to be strapped to a paddler’s ankle.

The law in Nevada is standup paddlers must have a life jacket on the paddle. People 12 and younger must wear a jacket.

Big tobacco embracing e-cigarettes

By Kyle Stock, Bloomberg Businessweek

Apparently, the nicotine business never changes—with smoke or without. Big Tobacco fought government overseers for decades, but eventually traditional cigarettes became heavily regulated products. Now the Food and Drug Administration is working on a package of regulations for e-cigarettes devices, which vaporize liquid nicotine with heat, rather than burning it via tobacco leaves. Among other things, the FDA is considering a ban on online sales of e-cigarettes to cut down on sales to minors, and discussing whether to curtail advertising. A roster of proposed rules is expected in October.

The regulatory chatter comes as the e-cigarette market is finally expected to top $1 billion this year. Tobacco giant Altria Group is just this month rolling out its e-cigarette, dubbed “MarkTen.” Reynolds American is also rushing to ship its VUSE product. Meanwhile, Lorillard booked $57 million in e-cigarette revenue in the first three months of the year.

Bloomberg Industries estimates that at their current pace, e-cigarette sales will top that of traditional smokes by 2047. The estimate comes with a big caveat: the assumption that politicians won’t heap a bunch of new taxes on e-

cigarettes—levies that have served as a sort of emphysema to the body of the cigarette business.

Read the whole story

Rim Fire's intensity takes toll on ecosystem

By Bettina Boxall, Los Angeles Times

Standing on ridges miles away from the Rim Fire, John Buckley has traced the path of the huge Sierra Nevada blaze by watching fire clouds billowing above the Stanislaus National Forest.

The view has been sobering. As the Rim blaze burns its way into the record books, Buckley thinks it is roasting some of the last remaining old-growth stands in the Stanislaus forest, incinerating thousands of acres of young trees planted at a cost of millions of dollars after massive 1987 fires and destroying important nesting areas for California spotted owls and goshawks.



The Rim Fire near Yosemite is one of the largest in

California’s history.
Photo/CBS Sacramento

The extent of ecological damage from the Rim fire won’t be known until after it dies out and crews survey the burn area. But given the intensity of the blaze and 200-foot-tall walls of flame shooting up canyons, Buckley and others expect nothing to be left on big patches of mountain chaparral areas and timberland.

“It’s making these incredible hot runs where it’s literally wiping out the forest,” said Buckley, an ex-firefighter for the U.S. Forest Service and head of the Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center, which has worked for more than two decades to protect the region’s ecosystem.

For a variety of reasons, the region is one of the most burned in the Sierra.

Read the whole story

Bill to protect mountain lions on Brown’s desk

By Aaron Kinney, Bay Area News Group

SACRAMENTO — A proposed law to prevent the needless killing of mountain lions by state wardens cleared the Legislature on Monday and now awaits the approval of Gov. Jerry Brown.

The legislation by state Sen. Jerry Hill, D-San Mateo, would give California Department Fish and Wildlife wardens broader authority to pursue non-lethal measures, such as trapping or

tranquilizing, when dealing with lions that are spotted in residential areas. It was inspired by the fatal shooting Dec. 1 of two cubs as they huddled under the porch of a home in Half Moon Bay.

Fish and Wildlife Director Charlton Bonhom approved new guidelines for wardens in March that achieve similar ends. If signed by the governor, Hill's proposal would reinforce those changes, codifying the internal protocols as state law.

"I don't think there's anybody in this building," Hill said Monday, "that wants to kill mountain lions unless they're posing a threat to humans."

Read the whole story

Firewood available in Nevada

The Nevada Division of State Parks has a amount number of firewood available for public purchase. Approximately 50 permits will go on sale Sept. 14.

The sale starts at 8am on the 1st floor of the Richard H. Bryan state office building, located at 901 South Stewart St. in Carson City. Permits are $50 per cord, cash or check only, limit one cord per address/family. The sale will end once all permits are sold.

Purchased wood may be picked up from Sept. 20-22 at the North Canyon area near Spooner Lake. A map will be provided with the permit. The wood is a mixture of pine and fir, some seasoned and some green. Most of the wood is approximately 18 inches with some odd sized and large rounds interspersed.

Access into North Canyon requires navigation through areas of

loose, sandy soils. Four-wheel drive or heavy duty two-wheel drive vehicles are strongly recommended. Trailers may be permitted at the discretion of state parks personnel. Trailers deemed unsafe by park staff must be left at the staging area.

Call Joy Elwood for more information, (775) 684.2793.

Bad air quality lingers in basin, western Nevada

Updated 2:25pm:

A dense smoke advisory is in effect for until 5pm Thursday for the greater Lake Tahoe area and the Carson Valley.

The National Weather Service in Reno is discouraging people in the basin, Alpine, Douglas and northern Mono counties from outdoor activities. Visibility is expected to be less than 3 miles and the air quality is expected to get worse as the day goes on.

Lake Tahoe Unified School District officials are monitoring the air throughout the day to determine if students, who returned to school on Monday, should be outside for recess and if athletes should be practicing outdoors.

The heavy smoke is coming from the Rim Fire, which is burning near Yosemite National Park. It has burned 179,481 acres and is 20 percent contained. It is the largest fire on record to burn in the Sierra Nevada and the sixth largest in California’s history. At least two dozen structures have been destroyed. The reservoir that provides drinking water for San Francisco remains in jeopardy.

The American Fire burning near Foresthill is almost fully contained. Full containment is expected Thursday – three days sooner than originally predicted.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

El Dorado County, union close to agreement

By Kathryn Reed

What was going to be a protest during today's El Dorado County Board of Supervisors is now expected to be more of an employee rally.

This is because labor negotiations suddenly took a turn for the better on Monday.

"We are cautiously optimistic we are going to be able to reach a settlement that is fair and equitable to everyone," Richard Boyd, senior business agent for Local 1, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The nearly 800-strong Local 1 has been negotiating with the county since February to come up with a contract. The bargaining unit has been working without a contract since June 30 when the previous three-year contract expired. An unfair labor practice charge was filed with the Public Employees Relations Board.

Boyd said the county has been negotiating in bad faith up until Aug. 26 and that it had violated various bargaining rules, which is why the charge was filed with PERB.

"Regarding the unfair labor practice grievance filed by Local

1, the county is aware of the claim. The claim is baseless and we find it surprising given the progress that the parties are making at the bargaining table," Terri Daly, the county's chief administrative officer, told *Lake Tahoe News* on Aug. 26.

Boyd believes filing the charge spurred the county to come to the table Monday with a more reasonable offer. That offer has not been made public. The union and county are slated to sit down again Sept. 9.

The union represents almost all county employees except for sworn officers and management.

In the contract that expired nearly two months ago no raises were given and the big item was that employees had to pay 3 percent into their retirement via the Public Employee Retirement System.

Now Local 1 is asking for a four-year contract with wage increases each year starting with 5 percent this fiscal year and 3 percent each of the subsequent years.

It's not that county isn't giving raises, but they are for higher ups. Kelly Webb, interim information technology director, went from step 3 on the pay scale to step 4 on July 23, and then to step 5 on Aug. 6. The electeds approved these raises on 5-0 votes.

On July 31 the rate of pay for the human resources director was $124,821. CAO Daly asked for it to be bumped to $157,810 and the supervisors said OK on Aug. 1. Then Daly hired a friend of hers for that position.

On today's agenda is an item talking about hiring a communications specialist at $100,000, even though it's not in the budget.

This chart details who the top salary earners are in El Dorado County.

A class and compensation study is also something the union wants.

“The county has agreed they are not competitive and because they are not competitive they have monumental recruitment and retention problems,” Boyd said.

What the union is upset about is what it calls cherry picking individuals for raises – like the IT and HR directors.

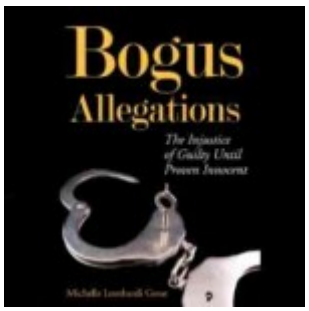
“For us, it gets down to a justice and fairness argument,” Boyd said.

Book challenges innocent until proven guilty theory

By Kathryn Reed

A knock on the door. It’s the police. Guns are drawn. You don’t know why. Your husband is hauled off to jail and then charged with a crime he didn’t commit.

This is the basic formula for TV shows throughout time. But this scenario is not from the imagination of some scriptwriter. It was the reality for a Boulder, Colo., couple.



Michelle Lombardi Gesse has written a first-person account of the harrowing experience she and her husband had with the criminal justice system in 2009. “Bogus Allegations: The Injustice of Guilty Until Proven Innocent” came out in 2012.

It’s a definite page-turner.

The absurdity of why the district attorney thought he had a case is mind-boggling. This is illustrated through Gesse's memory and supported by court transcripts.

As Gesse often points out, ours is not a system of innocent until proven guilty, but really, guilty until proven innocent.

I suppose the book struck home knowing there is an elected official in South Lake Tahoe whose life has been turned upside down by the law, but no charges filed. That would in many ways seem worse than what the Boulder couple endured. They at least had resolution.

The expense of the trial had the Gesses selling items to pay their attorney. It cost them friends. It nearly cost them their marriage.

While Steven Gesse was found not guilty on all charges, the ordeal changed them.

"Bogus Allegations" is not the best-written book. It gets bogged down with repetitiveness and doesn't always flow well. But the subject matter is compelling and in many ways terrifying because it points out how something like this could happen to anyone.